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is reproducing passionate politics that wrecked politicians rather than made them. Distribution, which was a vital issue for twenty years after the election of Van Buren, never produced measurable results, and was at best only a device to win votes. Whigs, who supported it in the hope that it might empty the treasury and advance their chances to get a high protective tariff, used it to dazzle frontier eyes, not to solve the social economic problem of the frontier region. The South, that fought it, disliked it less than the great political reactions it might produce; and Calhoun, its great enemy, was ready to go beyond distribution and give the lands themselves to the states in which they lay. Even the West, that shouted for distribution, knew that distribution would not meet its problems and continued at the same time to push for homesteads.

Professor Stephenson has worked out, with endless pains and great accuracy, the shifting currents of political feeling that flowed around the issue of distribution. Much of the result is negative because there is no other possible result for a political study of the lands in these years. He makes it entirely clear why Henry Clay had no right to be president.

The value of the book, and the learning and insight of the writer, increase the regret that the scheme omitted the economic and social phases of the lands. These were the years of manifest destiny. From the Detroit River to the Nueces the zone of the frontier swept in a great increasing crescent. The experiences of its rural conquerors made the first fundamental impression upon the Middle West we know today. The story of this social conquest has positive conclusions but is still untold; and we can only hope that when its teller comes he may do his work as adequately as has Professor Stephenson.

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The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776.

By ARTHUR MEIER SCHLESINGER. Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, Vol. LXXVIII; Whole No. 182. (New York: Longmans Green and Company. 1918. Pp. 647. \$4.00.)

That economic causes played a large part in bringing about the American Revolution has been understood from the time John Adams wrote that molasses was an essential ingredient in Amer-

ican independence, and they have been given due weight by modern historians who agree that "below the question of constitutional right lay the economic grievance as a stern reality." Dr. Schlesinger's book appraises with scientific exactness the share contributed toward revolt by one economic factor—namely, colonial trade interests. The gist of his study is that the colonial merchants of the commercial provinces initiated the struggle with the mother country by trying to boycott Great Britain into a surrender of her trade restrictions which were threatening them with bankruptcy; that their object was simply commercial reform not rebellion, but by their agitation and organized activities they roused the first discontents in the colonies; later, alarmed at the growing lawlessness and radicalism of forces beyond their control, they rallied to the support of British authority, and, except for their opposition in 1773 to the East India Company's plans, remained to the end loyal as a class.

The coöperation of the Southern colonists with their Northern brethren, however, was not brought about by the merchant class, who were English or Scotch agents of British firms and practically unaffected by the new trade laws, but by the planters, who were deeply in debt to these firms and saw in opposition to parliamentary restrictions a chance to escape from economic bondage (p. 39). How the policy of commercial coercion of the mother country was formed and executed is explained and illustrated with great fullness. The resentment over the East India Company's shipments of tea is shown to be due to the fear that the company was a grasping trading monopoly which would gradually undermine not only tea merchants but the whole colonial mercantile world (pp. 265-170); it was not because of the duty, as dutied tea was freely used everywhere before 1773 outside New York and Philadelphia (p. 244). Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts had a financial interest in the tea cargoes, which helps explain his refusal to send back the ships (p. 382).

This scholarly, technically-perfect monograph is an excellent example of the modern school of historical research. This means, among other things, that it lacks any touch of literary grace. Were it not for an occasional sentence from John Adams, or a thrust at "the Saints of New England" by Colonel Byrd, the monotony, or what Robert Frost calls the simple declarative tone of voice in writing, would be unrelieved.

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